

GENESIS

4:1-26

Genesis 4:1-26

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 6th August 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: 1 John 3:10-17

Introduction

Last week in Genesis chapter three, we saw the root of sin. This morning in chapter 4 we'll see the fruit of sin. That is, what started with one simple act of disobedience spiralled very quickly into much wickedness. And this should be a stark warning to us, that so-called small sins are anything but small. For sin has a tendency to reproduce, and grow, much like a cancer. And if left unchecked it will destroy a man. Or woman. Or family. Or church. Or society.

And the horrible truth is that the sin we read of last week, and will do this week, is rooted in the same problem we have — an incurably wicked heart, as Jeremiah describes it. But, God be praised that He has not only paid for our sin, but given us a new nature through which we are no longer *slaves* to sin. That is, we don't *have* to sin.

Overview of chapter four

Overview of chapter four

- **v1-7** — Cain & Abel's offerings

- **v8-15** — Cain murders Abel, God confronts Cain
- **v16-24** — Cain establishes a life out of God's presence
- **v25-26** — A new son for Adam & Eve

In the first 7 verses of chapter 4 we see Adam & Eve's first two sons bring an offering to the Lord — Abel's is accepted, but Cain's is rejected. And that angers Cain, and he lets anger lead to murder of his brother, as recorded in verses 8-15, along with God's rebuke of him. In verses 16-24, we see that following that tragic event, Cain moves away from the Lord, and literally moves away from his family, establishing a new life east of the Garden of Eden — and in this chapter we'll learn a few things about his descendants and the sin that continued to creep in. However, this chapter does not leave us without hope, for in the final 2 verses we read that Adam & Eve had another son, Seth, whose descendants we read of in Genesis chapter 5, which we'll study next Sunday morning.

Chapter four

So, turn with me to Genesis chapter four. Beginning at verse 1, we read:

Genesis 4:1

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD."

And so we begin this chapter with Adam & Eve starting to fulfil the command from the Lord in chapter *one*, to go forth and multiply. The word *knew* speaks of physical intimacy, which the Bible teaches is to be reserved for the confines of marriage. And we read that Eve conceived, and gave birth to a son whom her (and Adam) called Cain.

Then Eve makes this statement "I have acquired a man from the LORD", which at first glance is simply an acknowledgement that God was and is the giver of life. But there's more to it than that, for Eve had previously heard God say to Satan that there would be a Seed of the woman that would come who bruise his head (the language implying to crush or overwhelm Satan). And it's reasonable, based on this, to think that Eve thought Cain *was* that Seed. After all, Isaiah hadn't yet given the prophecy that it would be a *virgin* that would conceive, bear a Son, and call His name Immanuel (as Matthew quotes in his gospel). But Cain was *not* that Seed, as we'll very clearly see later in this chapter.

Genesis 4:2

Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

So Abel was the second-born. By this point, Cain was at *least* 9 months old, and Eve would have noticed something about him — that he had inherited her and Adam's sin nature. What a horrendous discovery that must have been, to realise how far the implications of their sin stretched. Of course, we see it too, in that we don't need to teach our children to do wrong, but to do good. But for Eve, there was no precedent for it — she had no mum friends, no antenatal classes, no nephews or nieces, and no kids in the Sunday school at her church that would have given her any expectation that her beautiful baby boy, was in fact going to be a sinner just like her.

And so she gives birth to her second-born, and calls him Abel, perhaps tellingly so, for his name means either *breath*, or *vanity*. Was it that with her hopes dashed, in that her older son, Cain, was showing sinful tendencies already, that she names Abel *vanity*, for she has lost the expectation that one of her own sons would be the *promised Seed*? Maybe so.

Now, we read of these two boys, that even with the same environment and same parents, they grew up to be two very different men, including in occupation.

Genesis 4:3

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

So as they grew up they became responsible themselves for approaching God. That's just like every child. You cannot rest on your parents faith, but you must personally come to the Lord. And here we see that Cain brings an offering to the Lord. That's a good thing, right? Well, we read that he "*brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD*" — and I don't believe this was the leftovers of his allotment, but rather the best of his produce. *But* it was the work of his hands. Contrast that with what we read next about Abel:

Genesis 4:4-5

Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

In contrast to Cain, who brought the best of the work of his hands, Abel brings a blood sacrifice, offering an innocent lamb. And in doing so, he followed the example that God had set by performing the sacrifice of an animal to cover Adam & Eve after they sinned in the Garden of Eden.

The shedding of blood was necessary. "*But isn't that horrible!?*", you might think. Yes it is. And that's how we *should* feel. For in offering a blood sacrifice, there is a graphic reminder of how wretched and foul sin is, for none of us are as repulsed by sin as we should be.

Later, Moses would write in Leviticus these words that God spoke:

Leviticus 17:11

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul!

This is something that the writer of Hebrews picks up on, noting that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. However, this covering was only temporary. Indeed, further on in the letter to the Hebrews we read the words "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*". That is, these things were a shadow of what was to come. That Jesus, *our* innocent lamb, was sacrificed for us — once and for all — that whoever repents and receives Him as their Saviour, will be forgiven of *all* their sin. Remember His words at the last supper:

Matthew 26:27-28

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

The horrible nature of a blood sacrifice is what was required to cover our sin. As Charles Finney put it, "*Sin is the most expensive thing in the universe. Nothing else can cost so much.*"

Now, beyond *what* Abel brought, it was the attitude in which he brought it. For we read in Hebrews chapter eleven:

Hebrews 11:4

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

That is, unlike Cain, Abel didn't trust his own efforts, but in the blood of the sacrificed lamb to cover his sin. Again, this was a temporary measure here in Genesis, but foreshadowing what Jesus would do on the cross for us. Likewise, we cannot approach God thinking our own efforts are somehow enough to either excuse or pay for our sin — they are not, and never will be — but rather we must come to God in faith also, resting not on anything we've done, but entirely on the blood of the Lamb.

However, Cain was very angry at this. Upset because he had determined himself what was acceptable to God, and upset and angry that God didn't agree with him. In essence, this was the first example of man-made religion — that is, man's attempt to set *himself* right with God.

In his letter, Jude warns of those who have gone in the *way* of Cain, and in part that is those who have tried to please God by the work of their own hands. Who, rather than coming by faith, have come on their own, thinking that their own works are good enough, nor that sin is as foul as it actually is. And don't we see that today? Multitudes believe and even preach that God is OK with sin, and that all we need to do is be a nice person, by our own efforts. But that will never restore our relationship with God, for the problem of sin is far greater than they suppose.

Jesus' words should be sharp warning to those who think that merely coming along to church, trying to be a nice person, doing good deeds, or even talking about Jesus, will somehow impress God and allow them to sail into Heaven. He said:

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Sin requires sacrifice. And specifically, substitutionary sacrifice — with the innocent paying for the guilty, that justice may still be done. That's where Cain went wrong. And because his own efforts were rejected, he was upset.

Genesis 4:6-7

So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

So then, God gives Cain an option — even now, after having tried to come to God through his own efforts, if he approaches God in faith (with a lamb offered in his place), he will be accepted. And the same is true for you. You will never be good enough to please God through your own efforts, but if you approach Him in repentance and faith, He will forgive your sin.

But, if you are unwilling to go to Him in faith, sin will easily ensnare you.

If you are not a Christian, your efforts to escape sin will be futile. Indeed, the Bible describes the unbeliever as a *slave* to sin, and the devil as wanting to take you captive to do *his* will. That is why we each need not only Jesus as our Saviour, but His Holy Spirit in us to *keep* us from sin. Indeed, for the believer, we *need* the Holy Spirit in our lives, *and* to yield to Him daily. Romans chapters 8 demonstrates that, contrasted to Romans 7 which explains the futility of trying to keep the law by our own efforts.

So, what does Cain do? Instead of turning to God, he walks into sin. Perhaps he shrugs this off, thinking it's no big deal. But as he discovers next, sin will take you further than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you wanted to pay.

And letting his anger fester over his brother's sacrifice being accepted, when his was not, things quickly escalate. We read in verse 8:

Genesis 4:8

Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Whatever their conversation was about, it evidently didn't calm Cain down. And he murdered his innocent brother in cold blood. We've only reached the second generation of mankind, and already one of them murders another. How devastating sin is. Why did he do this? We read in 1 John:

1 John 3:11-12

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

And so, John notes that Cain murdered Abel for no other reason than his own works had been exposed as evil, when his brother's were righteous. He left sin unchecked, and rather than rule over it, it ruled over him. We should take notice. For, as we read earlier in our service, John goes on to echo Jesus' words, writing that "*whoever hates his brother is a murderer*". That brings it home, for we have surely each hated someone without cause at some point in our lives. "*But murder?!*" we exclaim — "*we'd never do that!*", would we?

In one of his online articles, Sean McDowell writes:

It not easy to recognize that we share the same inherent capacity for evil as those who shed innocent blood. It's much more comfortable to think of murderers as "inhumane," that is, people fundamentally different than us. It makes us feel better. It makes us feel morally superior. It gets us off the hook.

Sean McDowell

But as he goes on to say:

...We humans have the inherent capacity to do far greater evil than we can imagine.

Sean McDowell

That's why Paul warned the Christians in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God provided a way of escape for Cain. But he chose not to go to God in repentance and faith, and instead found God wasn't joking when he said sin was at the door. We continue:

Genesis 4:9

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

God knew exactly what had gone on. Nothing was, or is, hidden from His sight. Including *our* secret sins. And here He asks Cain this question, not for information but for confession. But Cain both lies and shows contempt. Instead of admitting responsibility for his own actions, he states that he is not responsible for his brothers actions, as some sort of defence. But as we read in Galatians:

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

And we now see the consequence of Cain's sin:

Genesis 4:10-12

And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

Cain's sin had found him out. Rather than offer a blood sacrifice, he shed the blood of his brother — entirely opposite to Christ, who would later shed *His own* blood for His brethren. And the consequence of this is that the ground, which was *already* bringing forth thorns and thistles, would now be even harder for him to work. This wasn't God changing the nature of nature beyond the curse of Genesis 3, but rather that God would now frustrate the work of Cain's hands, the work that he was evidently so pleased with when he brought his offering to God.

Genesis 4:13

And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!

And oh, how we see Cain's heart further revealed. For his sorrow was not at his sin, but at his punishment. Rather than seek forgiveness, he complained about the consequences. And that's sadly the way many people are. We've seen people walk through the doors of *this* church with great sadness at their self-inflicted situation, but not once showing any remorse for their sin. Such as complaining of how hard it is being a single mum (which of course it is), but not once acknowledging their fornication.

And here, rather than confess his sin and ask God for His mercy, Cain continues his complaint:

Genesis 4:14

Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."

Cain's concerns are the practical consequences. And indeed he seems more concerned with what others think, than what God thinks. Yet God shows grace here, and puts either protection or a deterrent in place to keep him alive. We read:

Genesis 4:15

And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

Although later in chapter 9 God would say "*Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed*", at this stage God had not instituted that civil law. And Cain moves on, literally:

Genesis 4:16

Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

I had to laugh at the irony of almost falling asleep while reading this verse on Monday morning as I began studying this week. But of course, this wasn't about Cain having a nap, but physically moving away from his wider family. And you can understand why he might want to do that, for how could he have looked Adam & Eve in the face after murdering their only other son?

But more than that, we read Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. This is a far cry from what King David would later write in Psalm 51 where he says:

Psalm 51:10-11

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

With his sad attitude, Cain walks *away* from the Lord's presence, and establishes a godless civilisation. Verse 17 says:

Genesis 4:17

And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.

Now as mentioned last week, Cain's wife would have been one of his sisters. Indeed, we'll read in the next chapter that Adam had son's *and* daughters. The relative timing of their birth isn't recorded, but evidently Cain was married by the time the prior 16 verses had unfolded. And herein is one example of how you can always find *at least* one person who will take your side in sin.

And, as Jon Courson notes well, "*Cain wanders away from the Lord, and builds a city which he dedicates not to God, but to his son. He's desiring, determining, attempting to build his own empire. But watch what happens to his family...*". Let's read on:

Genesis 4:18

To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.

There's perhaps some hints within the meanings of these names as to what was going on with Cain's descendants, for it's suggested that Mehujael effectively means "wipe out the name of God", while Methusahel means "they are dead who are of God". And then we read of their grandson and son, respectively:

Genesis 4:19

Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah.

So, Lamech, not to be confused with the other Lamech (who was Noah's father), is the first recorded person to take two wives. This was never commanded by God, as it was, has always been, still is, and will always be that marriage should be one man and one woman for life. That's a standpoint that I'm certain will continue to come under attack, with polygamy being an area of wickedness that will increasingly make the news in this country and others in the coming years.

Reading about Lamech's two wives, we learn:

Genesis 4:20-22

And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

Here then, we see the emergence of man's creative ability, which is unsurprising given mankind was created in the image of God, who by definition, was and is creative. But next, we read:

Genesis 4:23

Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me.

Lamech was the first to have a polygamous marriage, and now he admits the second murder ever recorded. Trying to justify his actions he says how he was hurt by this young man — but in doing so, actually shows his actions, even *if* in self defence, to be completely disproportionate. Rather than taking his confession to the Lord, he (just like Cain) was more concerned with the earthly consequence to his actions than facing God, and said:

Genesis 4:24

If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

That is, Lamech assumes God's protection, when there is *no* such suggestion from God. And isn't this echoed today through people saying... "*I did this, and God is OK with it because...*". But we don't *do* things, and *then* decide God is OK with them. Rather, we are to *learn* how God would have us live, and *then* live within those boundaries for our own good, as well as His glory.

Likewise, we must not follow Lamech's example and try to justify our actions or minimise the seriousness of our sin by suggesting we are not as bad as other people (whether Cain or Hitler) in order to make ourselves *feel* better or suggest we deserve better or special *treatment*.

But also, reading here of how Lamech murdered instead of forgave someone who hurt him, we should diligently consider how much Christ has forgiven us, for there is no limit to how much we should forgive others. We read in Matthew's gospel:

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

In other words, keep forgiving until the Kingdom comes, until Christ returns. We are to keep forgiving, as Christ has forgiven us for all we have done wrong.

What attitudes we see here in this chapter! What sadness this must have brought Adam and Eve. Can you imagine the distress of having one of your children kill another? It would be like losing two children. But furthermore, remember that God had promised *the* Seed through Eve. How was that going to happen now?! That must have been on their mind. But we read:

Genesis 4:25

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."

Abel wasn't *the* Seed, but it would be through him that the Seed would come — that is, it would be through his descendants that Christ would come. And I'm so excited about studying chapter 5 together next Sunday morning as we will learn more about that there.

Genesis 4:26

And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.

And so this line through to Jesus begins. But we also read in this verse that “men began to call on the name of the LORD”. As Matthew Henry put it, “*perhaps not more than had been done at first, but more than had been done of late, since the defection of Cain*”. And men began to distinguish themselves — there were those who called on the name of the Lord, and those who chose to walk out of His presence to establish their own kingdom. The question is; which will you do?

You cannot come to God on your own terms, or by your own works. You can only come to Him through faith in what Jesus has done for you, as *the* Seed, as *the* sacrificed lamb in your place. But if you do that, you'll live. Just as we read in Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4, which says “*the just shall live by his faith*”. Not faith in yourself, but faith in Christ alone.

Conclusion

In closing this morning, let me draw your attention to Hebrews 12:24, which describes Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, and the sprinkling of *His* blood speaking better things than that of Abel. What is that better thing it speaks about?

Well, here's the morning entry from Charles Spurgeon's morning and evening devotional for January 20th... he writes:

As a shepherd Abel sanctified his work to the glory of God and offered a sacrifice of blood upon his altar, and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. This early type, a foreshadowing of our Lord, is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light that tinges the east at sunrise, it does not reveal everything, but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. As we see Abel, a shepherd and yet a priest, offering a sacrifice of sweet fragrance unto God, we discern our Lord, who brings before His Father a sacrifice to which Jehovah ever has respect. Abel was hated by his brother-hated without a cause; and even so was the Savior. The natural and carnal man hated the accepted man in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and did not rest until his blood had been shed. Abel fell and sprinkled his altar and sacrifice with his own blood, and therein sets forth the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord.

"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Let us weep over Him as we view Him slain by the hatred of mankind, staining the horns of His altar with His own blood. Abel's blood speaks. " And the LORD said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.? The blood of Jesus has a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy. It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at the altar of our Good Shepherd to see Him bleeding there as the slaughtered priest, and then to hear His blood speaking peace to all His flock peace in our conscience, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker, peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed men. Abel is the first shepherd in order of time, but our hearts shall ever place Jesus first in order of excellence. Great Keeper of the sheep, we, the people of Your pasture, bless You with our whole hearts when we see You slain for us.

Charles Spurgeon

Jesus blood speaks of mercy, and not of vengeance. How wonderfully kind our God is!

Application questions

Here's a few questions to ponder in your heart as you think about this chapter today:

- Are you trying to approach God through your own efforts, or by faith alone?
- Are you walking in the flesh, or in the Spirit?
- Do you yearn for God's presence, or have you walked away from it?

For the audio recording of this Bible study, and for additional studies, please see the DCF web site:



Deal Christian Fellowship
Simply teaching the Bible, simply
<https://dcf.church>